9 FILM HISTORY

THE KOBAL COLLECTION

The director Akira Kurosawa on the set of *Kagemusha* (1980)

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Films exist and can be read and analyzed in the context of culture and history. They can tell us a lot about a place and time. A film made during the Great Depression, for example, is situated in that turbulent time, and it is worth wondering what the film meant to audiences of the day.

Films can also be read and analyzed with regard to the mode of their production (mainstream or independent, for example). And they can be read in the context of a national tradition or film movement. As critical viewers, we are often asked to choose or establish a balance between textual analysis (a focus on the formal elements of cinema, which we have examined in chapters 2 through 6) and the cultural/historical perspective (discussed below).

We begin with a look at American modes of production—commercial mainstream and independent—from the advent of Hollywood through the current conglomerate studio system. The goal here is contextualize films with regard to the industry that produces them and the audience that likely consumes them.

A second important goal of this chapter is to introduce the history of various international cinemas, first Europe and then the range of films produced outside the so-called Western tradition in Japan, Hong Kong, and India. This is by no means an exhaustive survey of world cinema. Filmmakers elsewhere in the world have for over a century created meaningful and influential work. The goal here instead is to offer a starting point for exploring what is after all a global medium.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- **9-1** Identify the eras in Hollywood filmmaking from 1896 to the present day, and recognize the major filmmakers of each era.
- **9-2** Discuss key moments in indie film history.
- **9-3** Analyze the relationships among history, culture, and film form in four key European film movements: German expressionism, Soviet formalism, Italian neorealism, and the French New Wave.
- **9-4** Appreciate the contributions of filmmakers working outside the Americas and Europe, and discuss the key aspects of postwar cinemas in Japan, Hong Kong, and India.

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9-1 HOLLYWOOD

Movies in America began in the late nineteenth century on the East Coast of the United States. New York was the medium's first center of business and creative operation. But as audiences grew and demanded a steady stream of new films, the New York–based companies moved their production interests to a better location for year-round outdoor filming—Los Angeles, with its 320 days of sunshine per year and its wealth of possible locations: beaches, prairie, mountains, and an emerging urban center.

The first film studio in the Hollywood district of Los Angeles was founded in 1909 by the Selig Polyscope Company, which rented the back lot of a Chinese laundry on Olive Street. Selig did not stay in business long, but by the time it closed its doors, the first modern studios had established themselves on the West Coast, including Universal (fig. **9.1**), Paramount, and Warner Bros.

Today movie studios and business offices, soundstages, editing facilities, special effects houses and labs are dispersed throughout the L.A. area, but we continue to refer to the site of American filmmaking as Hollywood. Geography may well be beside the point here because Hollywood is not just or not really a place. We tend to use the term less to refer to a specific site than to a tradition of popular moviemaking in America.

The history of Hollywood can be organized into stages or periods that reflect large-scale changes in the film business. Many historians refer to the medium's nascent period from the 1890s through 1914—beginning with the first public presentations by Edison and ending with the advent of the feature-length film—as "early cinema." The silent era follows and runs from the introduction of features in 1914 through the industrywide adoption of sound in 1928.

Some American film historians date the next stage in film history, known as the classical era, from as early as the 1910s through as late as 1968, from the very beginning of a studio system in Hollywood through the industrywide adoption of the Voluntary Motion Picture Rating System. For the purposes of this historical survey, however, the classical era begins in 1928, as the

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9.1 An aerial view of the Universal studio lot in the 1920s.

Hollywood Eras

1895–1914 Early Cinema **1914–1928** Silent Era **1928–1947** Classical Hollywood

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studios transform their product lines to accommodate sound and successfully establish monopoly control over production, distribution, and exhibition, and it ends around 1947, with the eventual decline of the so-called contract era, the implementation of the Hollywood blacklist, and the studios' reactions to the Paramount Decision (discussed later in this chapter).

What to make of the period between the classical era and the more modern industry we have today is challenging. In many ways Hollywood was set adrift after World War II as the studios struggled to establish a new business model and audiences captivated by free television and a new leisure culture in the suburbs got out of the habit of going to the movies. Some American film historians label this era quite simply (but nonetheless accurately) a "transition." We will share that notion here.

The adoption of a new movie rating system in 1968 jump-started an era during which Hollywood executives invested in the auteur theory, the notion that films are authored by directors and the secret to commercially and artistically successful filmmaking lay in trusting talented directors to transform moribund genres. This auteur renaissance got filmgoers back in the habit of going to the movies but it proved short-lived as the industry dramatically shifted gears in the early 1980s, investing in bigger, more anonymous blockbusters favored by a more conglomerated, corporate, new Hollywood which continues to thrive today.

9-1a Early Cinema

The emergence of cinema as a modern American industry and pop-culture pastime accompanied and punctuated the nation's transformation into a mature industrial society. Indeed, cinema was just one in a series of modern industrial inventions; we can certainly view Edison's first projected and screened moving pictures (1896) in context with Alexander Graham Bell's telephone (1876), Edison's phonograph (1877), and Henry Ford's first "horseless carriage" (1896).

Movies rather quickly made the transition from invention to industry, and here again we can see its early development in the context of the times. The early twentieth century saw an increasing consolidation of power and wealth among a handful of American companies. The first move towards a consolidated, modernized, and standardized movie industry came in 1908 when Edison formed the **Motion Pictures Patents Company (MPPC) trust**, a collusive movie industry cartel (fig. **9.2**). The MPPC monopolized the production and distribution of American movies and successfully made cinema production and distribution fit the principles of standardization and efficiency introduced by Henry Ford.

Though the MPPC assured efficiency and productivity, the studio owners never fully understood and appreciated the medium's audience, which was largely composed of lower- and working-class urbanites. Competition quickly emerged from a second cartel, this one headed by a group of first-generation immigrants, men quite like the audience they served. These self-proclaimed

Motion Pictures Patents Company (MPPC) trust The first film industry cartel to monopolize the production and distribution of American movies.

1948–1968 Hollywood in Transition **1968–1980** Auteur Period **1980–present** New Hollywood

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9.2 The Motion Picture Patents Company trust linked the interests of Edison and nine of his competitors: Biograph, Vitagraph, Essanay, Kalem, Selig Polyscope, Lubin, Star Film, Pathé Frères, and Kleine Optical. Seated, front and center, the trust's founder and foremost member: Thomas Edison.

9.3 Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). Porter's film, made for the Edison Manufacturing Company (one of the MPPC trust companies), was an early example of the narrative short. The MPPC companies did not believe that film audiences, composed of so many immigrants and working-class patrons, were capable of sitting through anything longer than four reels (16–20 minutes).

independents (headed by Carl Laemmle, William Fox, and Adolph Zukor; more on them later in this chapter) ventured west and "invented" Hollywood.

The three most significant filmmakers to emerge in this **early cinema era** were Edwin S. Porter, D. W. Griffith, and Mack Sennett. Porter introduced story films for the Edison Manufacturing Company (fig. **9.3**). Griffith (working for American Biograph, a member of the cartel as well) mined the dramatic potential of the Victorian melodrama and became American cinema's first director-auteur. The former vaudevillian Mack Sennett introduced the knockabout comedy: crude, physically demanding, short films that wrung comic effect out of hair-raising stunts and the exploitation of physical and geographic stereotypes. Sennett made films for Keystone Studios, one of the first West Coast production units.

The precise reasons why movies became as important as they became and why they caught on with the American public as fast as they did are difficult to pin down. Among the possible explanations is that these early films engaged aspects of the rapidly changing economic and political culture in a medium that most people could appreciate and understand. We find in these early films a penchant for cautionary melodrama—films about the evils of alcohol, for example; films about the perils of modernity and urbanization (fig. **9.4**). Movie westerns also focused on the changing economy and political culture. The Wild West itself still existed—there were still cowboys and Indians—but these films seemed already nostalgic (for simpler times, for a less

9.4 D. W. Griffith's gangster melodrama *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (1912). The film focused on the perils of modernity and urbanization, typical of the cautionary melodrama so popular in the early cinema era.

independents A label first applied to filmmakers outside the MPPC and later used to refer to those working outside the Hollywood studios.

early cinema era Begins with the advent of cinema (circa 1895) and ends with the introduction of feature-length films (1914).

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PARAMOUNT/THE KOBAL COLLECTION/HOOVER, NYC

9.5 A 1921 publicity photograph of the All-American movie star Wallace Reid. He was promoted as a "man's man": the hunting dog and rifle, the shirt unbuttoned to reveal an athletic physique, the sleeves rolled up in a casual manner. His death from a drug overdose was one of several star scandals that rocked the nascent movie colony.

modern America). Finally, the slapstick comedies that were so popular early on revealed an impatience with the puritanical morality of nineteenth-century America; propriety and pretension in these films were almost always upset. At the same time, slapsticks also subtly lampooned modern industrial culture; audiences took pleasure in the sight of all those machines (cars, tractors, etc.) crashing or blowing up.

9-1b Silent Cinema

The movies came of age in America with the advent of features, a growing expertise and sophistication in production, and the introduction of a wide range of genres and styles. Accompanying postwar optimism and an economic boom characterized by conspicuous consumption—the so-called Jazz Age or Roaring Twenties—was the sudden popularity of the Hollywood movie star. Some of these **silent era** stars, Rudolph Valentino and Theda Bara for example, embodied a dangerous sexuality in an era characterized by urbanization, immigration, and a

9.6 Comedy film star Charlie Chaplin in *The Bank* (Chaplin, 1915). Here we see the little tramp character, played by Chaplin, pining for a society woman he knows he can never have. He later dreams that he thwarts a bank robbery and earns her love, but when he wakes up he and we realize that the dream is quite clearly an impossible fantasy.

loosening of nineteenth-century moral codes. Others—Douglas Fairbanks, Wallace Reid (fig. **9.5**), and Mary Pickford—represented an all-American ideal: healthy, handsome, and prosperous. Movie stars became a primary attraction to filmgoers, so much so that Carl Laemmle, the founder of Universal Pictures, dubbed the movie star "the fundamental thing" in the movie business.

By the early 1920s, studio managers like Laemmle (Universal), William Fox (Fox), Adolph Zukor (Paramount), Marcus Loew (MGM), and Sam, Harry, Jack, and Albert Warner (Warner Bros.), Eastern European Jewish immigrants who first found success in the East Coast exhibition business, operated much as the MPPC had ten years earlier: as an industry cartel that limited competition and standardized policies, procedures, and product lines. None of the studio moguls were artists; none of them were filmmakers. They were instead hard-nosed businessmen with unbridled confidence in the commercial value of the product their companies produced and a keen understanding of the audience they served.

Hugely influential in this era were the directors D. W. Griffith, Cecil B. DeMille, Erich von Stroheim, and F. W. Murnau, all of whom specialized in melodramas; the producer Thomas Ince, who made mostly westerns; and the film comedy pioneers Charlie Chaplin (fig. **9.6**), Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd. The films made by

silent era Begins with the introduction of features (1914) and ends with the advent of sound (1928).

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these directors laid bare the contradictions of the age—between the American ideal of equality and the reality of class difference, between the greater freedoms and pleasures promised by modern city life and the loss of traditional values associated with rural communities—in ways the American moviegoing audience could appreciate and understand.

The silent era provided a number of opportunities for women writers and directors. Among the most influential of the women writing scenarios and scripts in this era were June Mathis (who penned the Rudolph Valentino melodrama *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, directed by Rex Ingram in 1921), Jeanie Macpherson (who wrote DeMille's seminal melodrama *The Cheat*, 1915), and Frances Marion (whose career spanned the silent and early sound eras; she won Oscars two years in a row for *The Big House*, directed by George W. Hill in 1930, and King Vidor's *The Champ* in 1931). Female directors in this era included Alice Guy (known as Alice Guy Blaché after her marriage to Herbert Blaché, with *The Making of an American Citizen*, 1912, and *The Vampire*, 1915), Lois Weber (*The Merchant of Venice*, 1914), and in a career spanning the silents and talkies, Dorothy Arzner (*The Wild Party*, 1929). The considerable contributions of these women behind the scenes of movie production are only part of the story. Guy Blaché, for example, made the transition from behind the camera to the executive suite, eventually becoming the CEO of the independent film company Solax, and Mathis parlayed her success as the writer of Valentino's films into executive positions at Goldwyn, MGM, and First National.

9-1c Classical Hollywood

The era of **classical Hollywood** begins with the advent of sound (see chapter 6), which allowed for the creation of dialogue-intensive scripts, the introduction of musicals as a film genre, and the establishment of a very successful system for organizing and managing the production, distribution, and exhibition of motion pictures. Classical Hollywood spans twenty years of American cultural history, running from the stock market crash of 1929 through World War II and the beginning of the Cold War.

At its height in the final years before the United States entered World War II, studio dominance over the movie industry was breathtaking. In 1940 the "big eight"—Columbia, MGM, Paramount, RKO, Twentieth Century Fox, United Artists, Universal, and Warner Bros.—produced 75 percent of the films made in the United States and generated 90 percent of the movie industry's gross revenue. The top three studios (MGM, Paramount, and Fox) boasted annual revenues in excess of $100 million. Seven of the "big eight" studios averaged a release slate of more than forty-five films per year, a simply astonishing output of nearly one feature film per week. Vertical and horizontal integration—profit stakes in the development, production, postproduction, and exhibition of motion pictures; control over a contract workforce; and ownership of interior and exterior sites of production—gave the studios monopoly control over the motion picture industrial process and revenue stream.

The studio system was based on contracts; rather than hire the creative and technical talent required to make each film on a project-by-project basis, the studios established exclusive relationships with labor. From movie stars to hairdressers, from writers and directors to carpenters and soundmen, everyone was contracted to work exclusively for one studio. This contract system proved to be an efficient means of production and fueled the creation of "studio styles." Warner Bros., for example, became known for gritty, urban melodramas, in part because their contracted stars included the un-pretty urban tough guys Humphrey Bogart, Edward G. Robinson, and James Cagney (fig. **9.7**). MGM became well known for musicals, primarily

9.7 The Warner Bros. house style was on display in the gritty, urban detective film *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941). The film starred the studio contract players Sydney Greenstreet (seated, center), Peter Lorre (in the bow tie), and Humphrey Bogart (standing screen right, hands on hips), all of whom would appear together again in the Warner Bros. hit *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz), released the following year.

classical Hollywood The so-called "studio era" roughly from the advent of sound through World War II. Distinguished by an approach to filmmaking that strove for an "invisible style" that allowed viewers to become absorbed by the world of the film.

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because they had the movie star Judy Garland and the choreographer-director Busby Berkeley under contract.

To fully understand American movies of this era, one must at least consider the industrial apparatus, the studio system that completely controlled the medium. The house styles formed the foundation for "the classical American cinema," an approach to filmmaking that strove for an "invisible style," a seamless look that emphasized narrative continuity over cinematic experimentation. The classical era witnessed the blossoming of American film genres: the western, the gangster film, the horror film, and the romantic comedy. Genres deftly reflected the social and economic realities of the times, staging cultural concerns (crime, war, gender identity, and sexual relations) in otherwise familiar and formulaic form.

Key titles emerging out of the studio system as often as not came from directors whose names are no longer so familiar today, studio directors who went from project to project, including Victor Fleming, who made *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz* (both 1939); and Michael Curtiz, who, while under contract at Warner Bros., directed *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) and *Casablanca* (1942). A handful of important filmmakers from this era whose names are more familiar today include Ernst Lubitsch, John Ford, Howard Hawks, Frank Capra, and Orson Welles. Lubitsch worked mostly for one studio, Paramount, for which he was perhaps the most interesting but nonetheless one of many directors specializing in the studio's signature brand of romantic comedy. Lubitsch became well known for a light touch as a cine-stylist and a deft ability with risqué material, but he thrived in part because he made the sorts of films that fit the Paramount house style and best used the Paramount stable of stars (fig. **9.8**).

John Ford directed a number of important westerns (*Stagecoach* is his best known from this era), many of them with the same iconic movie star, John Wayne. But like most great studio directors, he was adept at a variety of dramatic films including political melodramas like *The Informer* (1935) and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940). This sort of versatility was the hallmark of Hawks's career as well. He was the ideal studio-era director because he so expertly made a variety of films in a variety of genres: the gangster film *Scarface* (1932), the romantic comedy *Bringing up Baby* (1938), the hard-boiled detective film *The Big Sleep* (1946), and the classic western *Red River* (1948). Directors during the classical era had to be expert at working within "the system." Without ever calling attention to their own contributions, these directors maintained an artistic integrity with regard to the final product.

9.8 *Trouble in Paradise,* a 1932 romantic comedy directed by Ernst Lubitsch for Paramount, the classical-era studio best known for romantic comedies. The term *the Lubitsch touch* was coined to describe the director's stylization of risqué themes, but his success owed a lot to the studio's commitment to comedy films and the talented comedy actors under contract there.

9.9 Frank Capra's *Meet John Doe* (1941), a timely political melodrama infused with Capra's signature libertarian Americanism. Capra was an unusual studio director during the classical era because he successfully imposed his peculiar politics on every film he made.

Capra and Welles offer useful exceptions to the model of the self-effacing studio director. Like Ford and Hawks, Capra directed a range of films: comedies like *It Happened One Night* (1934), political melodramas like *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) and *Meet John Doe* (fig. **9.9**), and the Christmastime classic *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946). But each of these very different films evinces Capra's peculiar American libertarianism. Though the films no doubt satisfied the studio's style and priority on narrative continuity, "Capra-esque"

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became a descriptor that really meant something to American filmgoers during the classical era—something approximating a political point of view, a depiction of America and Americana specific to the director.

Welles belongs in a category all his own, and not only because his 1941 debut film, *Citizen Kane*, proved revolutionary with regard to its complex narrative form, deep-focus style, and complex sound mix. Unlike the classical-era directors who made their names working within the system, Welles made his by bucking the studios—by, frankly, not working well with others. It was not a productive strategy, and his contributions to American cinema after 1941 are as a consequence difficult to assess. His second film, *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), for example, was the first but not last time he balked at studio procedure, refusing to reshoot and recut the film, even though preview audiences found the picture overlong and depressing. RKO cut 50 minutes from the film's running time and shot a new (happy) ending. What movie audiences saw in 1942 was thus a very different film from the one Welles had made. The same basic pattern prevailed on later films, including his 1958 border mystery *Touch of Evil*, which was edited again without his cooperation or approval. (An authentic version of the film—one that was restored in 1998 by Walter Murch following a 58-page memo Welles sent to the studio—is now available and is a vast improvement upon what audiences saw in 1958.) Most of the rest of his output remains tragically compromised by studio interference, serial problems raising money (interrupting or compromising production), and Welles's own arrogance and intransigence.

The classical era required of its directors an ability to work within a system designed to optimize production (to be fiscally efficient and commercially successful). It also required of them the ability to work within a strict regime of censorship. Following a series of star scandals in the 1920s involving suicide, rape, murder, homosexuality, and drug addiction, conservative "reformers" pressured the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA) to monitor the Hollywood colony and censor the content of American movies. The studios endorsed a strict **Production Code** in 1930, and then in 1934 empowered the Production Code Administration to enforce this strict regime of censorship industrywide. (See box "The Production Code: A Summary.")

Production Code A regime of censorship introduced in 1930. This code strictly regulated on-screen images and narratives from 1930 through 1968.

The Production Code: A Summary

The 1930 Production Code elaborated twelve areas of concern:

1. *Crimes:* Included were subsections on the methods used by criminals to commit murder, arson, and robbery (prohibiting anything that could be used as instructions for fear of copycats in the audience); drug trafficking; and alcohol production, distribution, and consumption (illegal under the Volstead Act).
2. *Sex:* Included were subsections on adultery (never justified), scenes of passion (with a specific prohibition on "excessive and lustful kissing"), seduction or rape (seen as more or less the same thing—a specific sub-subsection prohibits use of such scenes in comedy films), sex perversion (not defined or specified), white slavery, miscegenation, venereal disease, scenes of actual childbirth and children's sex organs (the on-screen depiction of which was strictly prohibited).
3. *Vulgarity*: Good taste must prevail.
4. *Obscenity*: Not defined and something of a catch-all.
5. *Profanity*: Rough language (expletives, blasphemy) was strictly censored. The list of forbidden words included: "alley cat" (applied to a woman), "cripes," "fanny," "whore," "damn," "pansy," and "nuts" (except when meaning "crazy").
6. *Costume*: "Complete nudity" was strictly forbidden. Diaphanous, overly revealing clothing could not be worn. Scenes showing characters getting undressed "should be avoided."
7. *Dances*: No sexually suggestive movement or gesture was allowed.
8. *Religion*: All faiths and denominations must be respected. "Ministers of religion. . .should not be used as comic characters or villains."
9. *Locations*: "The treatment of bedrooms must be governed by good taste and delicacy."
10. *National feelings*: Reverence for the flag and country; respect for other nations and nationalities.
11. *Titles*: "Salacious, indecent, or obscene titles shall not be used."
12. *Repellent subjects:* Prohibitions against depictions of executions, third-degree methods (used by police), brutality, "branding of people or animals," "cruelty to children or animals," white slavery, and surgical operations.

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9.10 Transition-era movie star Marlon Brando in Elia Kazan's social-realist melodrama *On the Waterfront* (1953).

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9.11 Director Alfred Hitchcock mugs for the camera on the set of *Psycho* (1960). Hitchcock was one of the few directors during the transitional era who became as well-known as his films.

9-1d Hollywood in Transition

The period between the end of World War II (1946) and the industrywide adoption of the MPAA Voluntary Movie Rating System (1968) resists an easy label. The contract system unraveled with the advent of the postwar economy, and the signature studio styles that had characterized classical Hollywood became less meaningful or distinct. All at once the industry was beset by a government-prompted and industry-enforced blacklist (of alleged Communists in the movie business; see chapter 2) and a Supreme Court antitrust case (the Paramount Decision of 1948) that forced the studios to sell off their movie theaters and in doing so complicated their decades-old model of financing movies. Urban audiences that had flocked to movie palaces shrunk as the middle class began moving to the suburbs, and the advent of free television and further competition from the (rock-and-roll) recording industry contributed to a troubling box-office decline. American film historians tend to view this era as simply and aptly "Hollywood in transition" . . . in transition from old to new, from classical Hollywood to a more modern, conglomerate, global movie business.

While it was anything but business as usual in Hollywood, the industry continued to bank on movie stars such as Marlon Brando (fig. **9.10**), Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, Grace Kelly, John Wayne, and Doris Day. In most cases the stars did not "belong" to any one studio; as a consequence, studio styles were no longer shaped around a charismatic actor or actress. A handful of directors, including Billy Wilder, Alfred Hitchcock (fig. **9.11**), and Elia Kazan, followed Welles's lead and asserted their artistic signatures on their films; they became what the French critics would soon call **auteurs**, or authors, a concept that would have been unthinkable during the classical era.

The studios struggled to find a new business model for financing and exhibiting their films after the Paramount Decision forced divestiture (the selling off of studio-owned theaters), but they nonetheless produced a number of important genre films: westerns like *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956) and *Rio Bravo* (fig. **9.12**), musicals like *Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965) and *West Side Story* (Wise, 1961), social-realist melodramas like *On the Waterfront* and *Rebel without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955), comedies like *The Seven Year Itch* (Billy Wilder, 1959) and *Some Like It Hot* (Wilder, 1959), and in the first decade after the war, films noir, despairing crime films like *Out of the Past* (Jacques Tourneur, 1947) and *The Big Heat* (Fritz Lang, 1953).

Many American film historians date the end of this transitional era with the introduction of the Voluntary Movie Rating System in 1968. Indeed, the transitional era was characterized by films that challenged the PCA and its Production Code, which continued to make it difficult for the studios to distinguish their films from the similarly censored shows on television. Adaptations of more adult-oriented material in established stage plays like *The Moon Is Blue* (Otto Preminger, 1953), *Tea and*

auteur French film critics in the 1950s argued that while films are the product of a collaborative process they nonetheless have a single author or auteur: the director.

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9.12 Movie star John Wayne in Howard Hawks's transition-era western *Rio Bravo* (1959).

Sympathy (Vincente Minnelli, 1956), and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (Mike Nichols, 1966) challenged the code and still did well at the box office. More films with more adult themes—frank language, realistic depictions of crime and punishment, sexual situations, and erotic themes (*The Graduate* [Mike Nichols, 1967], *Bonnie and Clyde* [Arthur Penn, 1967], and *Rosemary's Baby* [Roman Polanski, 1968])—followed and by the mid-1960s the studios faced the fact that they would need to modernize the content of their films or get out of the business of making movies.

9-1e The Auteur Renaissance

1968 proved to be a pivotal year in American film history. The new Voluntary Movie Rating System introduced that year changed the look and sound of American cinema, making possible more adult-themed films that explored formerly regulated subjects like sexuality and criminality. It also ushered in a new era of box-office prosperity.

1968 was also a pivotal year in American social and political history. The year saw two political assassinations (of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., and presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy) and a dramatic turn for the worse for U.S. forces in the Vietnam War as the Tet Offensive (a surprise attack by the North Vietnamese mounted during the New Year celebration) made clear to many Americans that the war could not be won. The year climaxed with riots outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago and ended with the election of Richard Nixon as president. Many of the films released during this era focused directly or metaphorically on the growing political divide between old and young (the "generation gap") and widespread disillusionment in government in general (thanks to an apparent cover-up in the investigation into the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the corruption scandal resulting from the break-in at the Watergate Hotel that led to President Nixon's resignation in 1973).

9.13 and 9.14 Two auteur-era films that profoundly reflected a widespread political disillusionment: Robert Altman's *Nashville* (1975) and Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976). Both films depict young men whose alienation leads them to contemplate an assassination.

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9.15 Francis Ford Coppola's signature visual style: theatrical blocking, chiaroscuro lighting. *The Godfather: Part II*, 1974.

9.16 Robert Altman's signature widescreen mise-en-scène and camera work and complex sound mix can be seen in his 1971 western *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*.

To produce a new American cinema that might reflect or capture this tumultuous era and in doing so attract younger (more politically cynical) filmgoers to finally put an end to the generation-long, box-office slide, the studios turned to a coterie of young directors later dubbed the "movie brats." Many of these young cineastes had honed their skills at the nation's top film schools, where they were exposed to not only the best training in production techniques but also to film history and theory. Popular at the time in critical circles was the auteur theory that posited that every film had an "author" (its director). The three most prominent auteurs in the 1970s were Francis Ford Coppola, Robert Altman, and Martin Scorsese. All three of these auteurs became celebrities whose names alone, like movie stars of years past, could "open" (could be used to successfully promote) a film.

These auteurs endeavored to place their marks, their artistic signatures, on what were otherwise commercial, Hollywood genre films. What distinguished, for example, Coppola's two 1970s gangster films, *The Godfather* (1972) and *The Godfather: Part II* (fig. **9.15**), was the director's signature style: an affection for theatrical mise-en-scène: stagey set-pieces captured in long takes and a penchant for chiaroscuro lighting; a narrative focus on the family melodrama as opposed to the practical execution of crimes. Coppola reinvigorated the genre and at the same time made the gangster saga his own. In his later work, he brought his signature style to other genres: a war film (*Apocalypse Now*, 1979), a teen-picture (*Rumble Fish*, 1983), and a horror film (*Bram Stoker's Dracula*, 1992).

Altman established a distinct artistic signature adhering around a complex, realistic sound mix, moving camera, and evocative use of widescreen mise-en-scène and camera work. And this style is apparent in a variety of genre projects: a western (*McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, fig. **9.16**), a crime film (*Thieves Like Us*, 1974), and a live-action adaptation of a popular cartoon character (*Popeye*, 1980).

Scorsese imbued many of his films with a recognizable, personal visual style. His films showcase signature stylistic tendencies or habits: an incessant moving camera, complex use of voice-over, and popular music. The narratives often focus on moral, spiritual questions. These signature elements and thematic preoccupations can be found whether we are watching a gangster film (*Mean Streets*, 1973) or a faithful adaptation of Edith Wharton's novel *The Age of Innocence* (1993), a melodrama chronicling the lives and loves of New York City's upper crust in the 1870s.

Many American film historians view the 1970s as a golden age when the artists finally, albeit briefly, took over Hollywood. This era was, alas, short-lived. Studio executives needed a way out of the box-office slide that persisted after World War II; they needed to get young people back into the habit of going to the movies. With the blockbuster success of *The Godfather*, the solution seemed clear: studio executives would need to trust talented filmmakers to update moribund film genres. But such an indulgence of creative talent was by design temporary; executives

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9.17 Steven Spielberg's *ET: The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), the model new Hollywood blockbuster.

9.18 Everything old is new again in the new Hollywood: J. J. Abrams's reimagined and rebooted *Star Trek* (2009), the eleventh installment in the venerable franchise adapted from the classic network television series.

were neither anxious nor willing to abdicate control to auteurs for long. Despite the continued success of certain auteur films (Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, for example, grossed over $100 million in 1979), by the end of the 1970s the studios abandoned the auteur formula in favor of the more predictable and anonymous blockbuster (discussed below).

9-1f The New Hollywood

In a landslide election in 1980, the former Screen Actors Guild President and California Governor Ronald Reagan took the presidency, winning all but four states. Promising to free the federal government from "special interests" and in doing so free the American people from the burden of big government, Reagan supported a "supply-side" ("trickle-down") economic policy that reduced spending on federal social programs and cut taxes. Reagan's insistence on deregulation enabled big businesses across the American economy to get even bigger. In the film industry, this meant a gradual move for the studios back into exhibition and greater diversification and monopolization within the growingly interconnected entertainment industries of movies, TV, and music. Lax enforcement by the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) and FTC (Federal Trade Commission)—hallmarks of the deregulated capitalism of Reaganomics—in many ways made the new conglomerate, synergistic Hollywood possible.

With increased conglomeration came an abandonment of the auteur theory and an increasing emphasis on formulaic blockbusters—thrill-ride movies that delivered on a simple promise to entertain. During this era, action-adventure became the genre of choice and movies were increasingly targeted at adolescent and post-adolescent boys. If any vestige of auteurism survived, it was, on the mainstream screen at least, a box-office auteurism dominated by two producer-directors, Steven Spielberg (fig. **9.17**) and George Lucas. For these two men, whose work and artistic signatures would intersect throughout the eighties and nineties, auteurship was less a matter of a personal signature style than of box-office clout.

Much like the classical era, films as opposed to filmmakers took the fore and more and more film franchises—sequelized film properties (fig. **9.18**) celebrating action super-heroes or reinterpreting classic television shows—became so-called tent poles on which the studios could "hang" the rest of their films—blockbusters that earn so much money they support other projects at the studio.

Making fewer films and taking fewer risks than in any previous era, twenty-first-century Hollywood studio revenues have soared. In 2010 the studios earned $10 billion at the domestic box office and many billions more in foreign theatrical screenings as well as ancillary home box office markets both at home and overseas.

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9-2 AMERICAN INDEPENDENTS

Independence is in many ways the holy grail in the American film business: something most everyone who makes movies strives for but can never quite attain. To be independent in the film business denotes a freedom from something or someone—the studios, the vicissitudes of the commercial market, and the matrix of companies that dominate the production and distribution of motion pictures in America.

The first self-proclaimed "independents" were those film producers left out of the MPPC but still interested in making and distributing films. Led by the Jewish entrepreneurs Carl Laemmle (fig. **9.19**), William Fox, and Adolph Zukor, these outsiders formed the Motion Picture Distributing and Sales Company. By 1911, the Sales Company had forged a 30 percent market share. A few years later, the independents introduced an alternative product: feature-length films.

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9.19 Carl Laemmle (right) with the French filmmaker Georges Melies. Laemmle led the first wave of independent producers and directors and later founded Universal.

9.20 The legendary actor and activist Paul Robeson in his screen debut in Oscar Micheaux's silent melodrama *Body and Soul* (1925). All told, Micheaux directed over forty films, all of them so-called "race films."

In a landmark 1912 court case, *The Motion Picture Patents Company v. IMP* (Laemmle's Independent Motion Picture Company), a U.S. Circuit Court gave the independents access to formerly restricted equipment. The victory in court put the independents on a level playing field with the MPPC. And they seized the day. By 1914 the MPPC was no longer viable and Laemmle, Fox, and Zukor together established a new studio system, headed by their companies: Universal, Twentieth Century Fox, and Paramount, respectively. Ironically, in the years to follow, what independent cinema would be independent of and from would be the very film companies that first fashioned themselves as independents.

9-2a Race Films

When the former independents Laemmle, Fox, and Zukor became the ruling cartel in the film business, independent cinema became the province of small outfits making movies for specific target audiences. In 1915, for example, Noble Johnson's Lincoln Film Company began producing films made by and for African Americans. These **race films** focused on issues of

race films Films made by and for certain underserved ethnic groups, e.g., African American and Yiddish-language films in the 1920s and 1930s.

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interest to contemporary African Americans in dramas involving social and economic assimilation, including light-skinned African Americans "passing" as white. The best-known director of race films was the entrepreneurial auteur Oscar Micheaux, who went door to door to raise money to make his movies (fig. **9.20**). Micheaux's films played in select urban theaters and on the "chitlin' circuit"—venues in the Southeast where daily life featured a strict racial segregation.

Another genre of race films were the Yiddish-language pictures made by and for European Jewish immigrants living at the time in the Northeast. Set either in Eastern European *shtetls* (villages) or in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where many Eastern European Jews settled after immigrating to the United States, these films focused on the culture, history, and contemporary struggles of Jews in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Prominent directors included Sidney M. Goldin and Edgar Ulmer (who later directed the classic film noir *Detour* in 1945 and then became a "Poverty Row" executive).

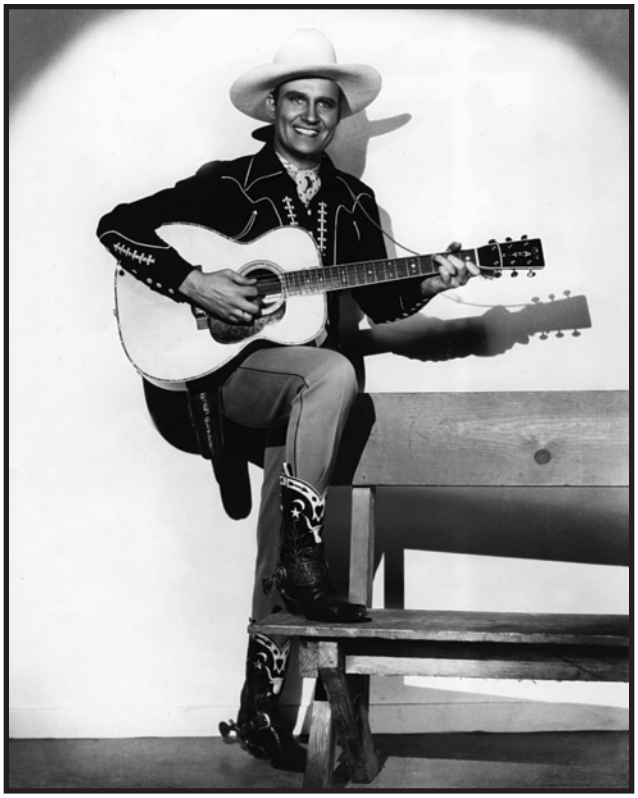
9-2b Poverty Row

All low-budget, independent cinema was and is not created equal; indeed indie cinema ranges from the sublime (art films) to the ridiculous (exploitation films). Even among the so-called niche films—films targeted at underserved audiences (e.g., the race films)—there is a range of products from the artful to the exploitative. Independent films are always independent of or from something, Hollywood usually, but different is not always better.

Movie palaces in the 1930s through the 1950s routinely offered audiences a full afternoon or evening's worth of entertainment: two features (a "double bill"), along with a newsreel, a live-action short (a comedy perhaps), and/or a cartoon. The double bill was headlined by the studio's A attraction. The **B film**, a lower-budget, genre film (a western, gangster picture, etc.), was a bonus for filmgoers who likely went to the theater to see the A feature. The studios initially made their own B films, but over time they ceded the business to a handful of small film companies headquartered in Gower Gulch, a neighborhood in Hollywood. These **Poverty Row** independent film companies, so named because they shared a neighborhood and a business plan, included Republic, Monogram, Grand National, Mascot, Tiffany, Peerless, Producers Releasing Corporation (PRC), Reliable, Syndicate, Big-Four, and Superior.

B film Mostly low-budget genre films made by smaller, independent film companies to round out a double bill.

Poverty Row A handful of small film companies specializing in B films headquartered in Gower Gulch, a neighborhood in Hollywood.



THE KOBAL COLLECTION

9.21 Republic Pictures' singing cowboy Gene Autry.

The Poverty Row companies made inexpensive, formulaic genre pictures. Though far less ambitious than the bigger studios, the Poverty Row houses made films faster than their better financed counterparts. Speed proved a distinct advantage when responding to fads, like the singing cowboy craze in the mid-1930s. Republic produced a series of films featuring Gene Autry (e.g., *Tumbleweeds*, Joseph Kane, 1935; fig. **9.21**), and Grand National banked on their singing cowpoke Tex Ritter in *Sing, Cowboy, Sing* (Robert Bradbury, 1937). The B western in general was extremely popular in the 1930s—the genre's nostalgic appeal never fully waned—and a number of nonsinging B-movie cowboy stars emerged: Johnny Mack, Harry Carey, Hoot Gibson, Tom Mix, and the soon to be A-list movie star, John Wayne.

Many B action-adventure films exploited the popularity of a previous major studio film or popular radio show. For example, Republic made a quickie-adventure film set in India titled *Storm over Bengal* (Sidney Salkow, 1938) after *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (Henry Hathaway, 1935) and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (Michael Curtiz, 1936) were successful for the major studios. B movies were unpretentious and often unambitious, but

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they were nonetheless essential to the larger movie show. Going to the movies was a good deal in those days; an afternoon's or evening's entertainment could be had for as little as twenty-five cents in 1940, fifty cents in 1950.

9-2c Exploitation

While the B-movie studios made films to fill out programs headlined by studio A pictures in exchange for a quick, modest payoff, **exploitation filmmakers** like Kroger Babb, a savvy huckster, made films that openly defied the strictures of the MPPDA Production Code and thus could not be screened on the same bill as a "legitimate" studio picture. Kroger is best known today for his 1945 sex-hygiene film *Mom and Dad*, a film chronicling the disastrous consequences of a young single girl's ill-advised sexual liaison.

THE KOBAL COLLECTION

9.22 A drug fiend clutching a marijuana cigarette at a jazz party in *Reefer Madness* (aka *Tell Your Children*, Louis Gasnier, 1936). Exploitation films offered lurid tales in the guise of education.

Because *Mom and Dad* could not be shown as part of a larger, legitimate film program, Babb traveled with his film in his car and rented out (four-walled) theaters for a day. (See the discussion of four-walling in chapter 7.) Babb would advertise his show with lurid posters (which themselves would have been forbidden by the mainstream industry's Production Code) promising just what the studios could not at the time deliver: "Everything shown. Everything explained." For many of the screenings of *Mom and Dad*, Babb hired an actor to play the part of a fictional sexologist named Dr. Elliot Forbes, who, after the screening answered questions from the crowd. It proved a popular if transparently ridiculous stunt. Babb and many of his fellow exploitation filmmakers made a lot of money by never overestimating the intelligence and taste of his audience.

Exploitation films often exploited filmgoers' fascination with sinful behavior in no small part because the studios had to be so careful about controversial issues. Popular topics for exploiters in the United States and abroad included lurid tales of drug-addled and/or sex-crazed youth (fig. **9.22**). These films so exaggerated the social problem they documented and the script and acting were so bad that audiences often found them comical, even camp.

Ridiculous as many of these films were, they were also somewhat ahead of their times. At the very least they tackled taboo topics the studios largely ignored. Some historians argue that exploitation cinema was "necessary" because of the Code and largely disappeared after 1968 when the Code was replaced with the Voluntary Movie Rating System. For example, exploitation films featured on-screen nudity well before mainstream cinema did. Indeed, a popular exploitation genre in the 1950s was the nudist colony film. *Garden of Eden* (Max Nosseck, 1955), for example, showed ample on-screen nudity, which was forbidden by the Production Code. Following a landmark New York court case, in 1959 the independent filmmaker Russ Meyer made *The Immoral Mr. Teas*, a film about a man who gets conked on the head and develops the ability to see through women's clothing. We share that gift with Mr. Teas as we watch the film through his eyes, which linger on a number of attractive women he secretly undresses.

The Immoral Mr. Teas spawned a brief new wave of independent, exploitation pictures. These more visually explicit films included a variety of colorfully termed new genres: nudie cuties (suggestive, often light comedies with nudity but no touching), roughies (depicting antisocial behavior as well as nudity), kinkies (including a series of concentration camp–set soft-core sex films), and ghoulies (merging kink with gruesome horror). The common element among all these independent exploiters was on-screen nudity.

exploitation films Low-budget, independent films that appealed to filmgoers' fascination with sinful behavior or interest in pop culture fads. These films often defied the strictures of the Production Code.

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9.23 *Muscle Beach Party* (William Asher, 1964) was just one of several successful beach party films produced by Sam Arkoff for American International Pictures. Here comedian Don Rickles as Jack Fanny takes over the surfers' beach with his crew of bodybuilders, setting the ludicrous plot in motion.

9-2d Marginalized Filmmakers

The vast majority of commercial studio films are produced, written, directed, advertised, and promoted by white men. For women, people of color, and proponents or participants in non-traditional subcultures, there is little opportunity in Hollywood to make a big-budget movie. As a consequence, lower-budget, non-studio filmmaking—filmmaking independent of and from the Hollywood mainstream, filmmaking less dependent upon reaching a mass audience—has become the site for stories told by and about people that Hollywood movies tend to vilify, stereotype, or simply ignore.

Striking a less salacious note, another group of independent filmmakers in the 1950s and 1960s took aim at the burgeoning youth culture and found a ready and willing audience. Turned off by mainstream Hollywood fare, these teenagers had their own music, their own style. Chief among the purveyors of youth-oriented exploitation cinema were Samuel Z. Arkoff and Roger Corman, who together and then separately released films under the American International Pictures (AIP) and New World banners. Notable among Arkoff's productions are the *Beach Party* films (1963–1966; fig. **9.23**). Made fast and on the cheap, these films exploited the popularity with young American moviegoers of Southern California beach culture: surfing, young women in bikinis, the Beach Boys' pop music, and so on. These films were often screened at drive-ins, a popular destination for teenagers nationwide. That the films tended to trivialize youth culture did not seem to matter much; after all, patrons of drive-ins were not necessarily all that interested in the movie being screened there.

In his over forty years in the indie film business, Roger Corman produced well over 300 pictures. He is best known for producing cheap horror movies for the drive-in market, films with titles like *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (fig. **9.24**), *Attack of the Giant Leeches* (1959), and *Creature from the Haunted Sea* (1961). Corman also produced and directed a handful of titles that transcended their puny budgets and slapdash production methods, films that are classics of a sort: *A Bucket of Blood* (1959), *Little Shop of Horrors* (1960), and *The Trip* (1967).

We can count today the number of African American filmmakers making big commercial films on one hand. But African American auteurs have found financing and a modicum of success on the indie circuit. Many of the films present a distinct, alternative point of view: for example, Leslie Harris's *Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.*, which tells the story of a promising African American high school student who gets pregnant and loses her chance to get out of the projects (fig. **9.25**). The film features long sequences of direct address (as the young woman tells her story—a rare instance of getting the first-person perspective of an African American woman), real urban locations, and a hip-hop score. What distinguishes it from a mainstream melodrama is

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9.24 Cheap thrills: *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (1957), one of the hundreds of low-budget exploitation horror films produced by Roger Corman.

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9.25 *Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.* (1992), directed by Leslie Harris. Chantel Mitchell, the main character, speaks directly to the audience in a break from the form and content of mainstream filmmaking. She talks about going to college and getting out of the projects, but Harris's film evinces no simple uplifting fantasy; Chantal talks a big game, but in the end she fulfills the promise of the film's title.

its sensibility, and its identity politics: it is a film by a young African American woman about a young African American woman.

Authenticity is a key to these new race movies. Many of them tell stories similar to those found in mainstream commercial films but focus on race in their approach to a social problem: Charles Burnett's cop film *The Glass Shield* (1995), for example, or Vondie Curtis-Hall's drug-rehab melodrama, *Gridlock'd* (1997), both of which focus on the causes of crime as opposed to simply exploiting its effects. Others focus on everyday lives of people of color, as in, for example, the working-class Chinese Americans in *Chan Is Missing* (Wayne Wang, 1982).

Indie cinema is also a haven for women filmmakers, most of whom continue to find it difficult to break into the mainstream commercial industry. It is a sobering fact that the percentage of women in executive positions and the percentage of women in the director's chair in the early 2000s are smaller than they were in the early 1900s. Like the race films by African–American and Chinese American filmmakers mentioned above, indie pictures directed by and about women provide an alternative to the typecasting and stereotyping characteristic of mainstream commercial pictures. Dating back to Claudia Weill's *Girlfriends* (1978) on through Nicole Holofcener's *Lovely and Amazing* (2001) and *Please Give* (fig. **9.26**), we find in these indie films by female directors character studies of adult women, women depicted as neither sex objects nor sidekicks.

The lives and loves of gay men and women are also handled differently in indie cinema; indeed, the humanized gay men in the indie film *Parting Glances* (Bill Sherwood, 1986) and the gay women in Lisa Cholodenko's low-budget *High Art* (fig. **9.27**) seem remarkable because they are not stereotyped or simplified. Such sensitive material successfully covered first in indie films often finds a second, bigger budget and wider audience life in boutique independents (see below). *Parting Glances* no doubt influenced the bigger-budget *Brokeback Mountain* (discussed below) and *High Art* helped set the stage for *The Kids Are Alright* (also directed by Cholodenko in 2010).

9-2e Boutique Independents

In the 1990s and early 2000s many of the independent film companies that began as alternative movie upstarts were swallowed up by the major studios. Disney, for example, bought out Miramax; Time Warner added New Line and Fine Line, and Universal picked up Focus Features. Other studios diversified in-house. Sony, for example, established its own indie subsidiary, Sony Pictures Classics, and Fox created Fox Searchlight.

The studios' move into so-called independent production and distribution has done little to unsettle the basic function of this alternative cinema; we are still talking about movies that emphasize talk over action, movies

9.26 Nicole Holofcener's indie character study *Please Give* (2010) depicts adult women as something other than attractive sidekicks or sex objects.

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directed by women and people of color, movies showcased primarily at festivals and in art houses. And this is by design. These **boutique independents** have added much-needed prestige to studio release slates otherwise dominated by empty action pictures. And when boutique releases win prizes at festivals like Sundance, Cannes, Venice, Berlin, and Toronto or awards at the Golden Globes or Oscars, they boost the studio's reputation and credibility. Though the bottom-line success of studio boutique films may not impress, especially when compared to the box-office take of a studio blockbuster, the bigger picture of studio success, which includes exposure during awards season, has come to depend on boutique label "independent" films.

For example, *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005; fig. **9.28**), released by Focus Features, earned eight Oscar nominations, winning three including Best Director. That year it also won Best Feature and Best Director at the Independent Spirit Awards. In 2005 Focus Features was widely seen as an indie outfit, but it was in fact a wholly owned subsidiary of NBC/Universal, a boutique division of a major studio. Independence was in this case more a matter of spirit than fact.

In contemporary Hollywood, *independence* is a term often used more casually to refer to films directed by independent-minded auteurs. Quentin Tarantino and the Coen brothers, for example, make films that reach wide audiences (especially among the coveted youth demographic), and most of what they make is distributed by major studios into multiplexes, not art houses (fig. **9.29**). Independence in this context

boutique independents So-called independent films made by subsidiaries of the major studios. Boutique independent companies include Miramax, Focus Features, and Fox Searchlight.

9.27 Lisa Cholodenko's 1998 lesbian-themed indie niche film *High Art*. Indie films often more sensitively focus on behaviors mainstream films vilify, oversimplify, or simply ignore.

9.28 Focus Feature's *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005), a boutique indie that focuses frankly on a marginalized subculture.

9.29 Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill, Volume 1* (2003) was independent in spirit perhaps but not in fact. It was released by Miramax, at the time owned by Disney, which invested over $50 million dollars in its production and another $25 million in its promotion and release . . . roughly ten times the financial investment involved in a typical indie production.

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is more a state of mind, an attitude, a vibe, a matter for the studios to finesse and use to their collective advantage. Independent filmmaking in contemporary American cinema need not have all that much to do with real independence; it is instead a genre, a type of film the studios make and market in a specific way.

9-3 EUROPE

Cinema is a global medium and traditions in moviemaking have emerged in almost every country on almost every continent on earth. Hollywood may well be the primary brand, but American movies share the stage, so to speak, with indigenous products, films that are often formally and technically quite different from the Hollywood product. These national cinemas evince the particular and peculiar histories and cultures of their given places and times; from them we can learn a bit about how other cultures think, how they frame and tell stories, their notions of design and composition, and the importance of conversation and music in their art and in their lives.

Though we risk a superficial sort of cultural tourism if we watch movies made elsewhere and draw conclusions from them about the places and events depicted on-screen, when we view foreign-made films we nonetheless gain a certain access to a culture we might otherwise never know. In this era in which the fluid transfer of money, information, and pop culture across national borders is commonplace, a broader notion of a global cinema is a necessity for the able global citizen. If we open ourselves up to foreign-made films, we can come to better understand and appreciate cultural differences while sharing a common affection for the medium.

We begin our study of filmmaking beyond the United States with European cinema, specifically the following national film movements: German expressionism, Soviet formalism, Italian neorealism, and the new waves in France, England, and Eastern Europe. These movements are notable because of their experiments with film form and themes and because they emerged at particularly interesting historical moments. While it is not possible to offer a complete survey in such a limited space, this brief introduction can serve as a starting point for exploring the rich offerings of European cinema.

9.30 *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), Robert Weine's film about a sleepwalking killer, is an early example of German expressionism.

9-3a German Expressionism

The **German expressionist** film movement thrived between the two world wars during what historians term the Weimar Republic. Its starting point is inexact; some historians begin with Henrik Galeen and Paul Wegener's *Der Golem* (1915), a film in which Jewish mystics create a monster out of clay. Other historians begin with a film released four years later, the psychological drama *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene), the story of a somnambulist hypnotized to commit murder (fig. **9.30**). The end point of the movement is easier to fix: 1933, the year Adolph Hitler became chancellor of Germany and nationalized the film industry under his Ministry of Propaganda. Hitler's government effectively put an end to the creative filmmaking that characterized the movement.

German expressionism A cinematic style that emerged in Germany between the two world wars. Expressionism is visually characterized by chiaroscuro lighting and highly stylized sets. The best-known expressionist filmmakers are Fritz Lang, F. W. Murnau, and G. W. Pabst.

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9.31 The vampire in *Nosferatu* (F. W. Murnau, 1922) is illuminated by a single key light that, in the absence of fill and back lights, presents an ominous figure floating in a void. The blue tint is unique to this print and was created by submerging it into a transparent dye.

9.32 Nosferatu ascends the staircase en route to Ellen Hutter's bedroom, where she will preside over his demise, keeping him "occupied" until dawn. To express visually the vampire's evil, his enormous shadow (his dark side, so to speak) precedes him up the stairs.

Expressionism celebrated the primacy of the shot (as opposed to the cut) and as such emphasized mise-en-scène over editing. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, for example, features hand-painted sets with dramatically distorted proportions for the architecture and furnishings. Expressionist lighting was notably ominous with visible shadows and dramatic fields of darkness in the frame. The low-key/high-contrast style depicted figures that seemed to float in a dark void, as in F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu*, loosely adapted from Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula* (figs. **9.31** and **9.32**).

What makes expressionism especially interesting are the ways in which the films seem to embody a sense of foreboding in Germany between the wars. Some historians have claimed that if we watch closely we can, figuratively speaking, see Hitler coming. We can observe a collective desire among Germans for someone or something to save the nation from peril both supernatural (monsters, killers, maniacs) and commonplace (poverty, inflation).

Several key titles, most notably G. W. Pabst's *Pandora's Box* (1929) and Fritz Lang's *M* (fig. **9.33**), offer deft ruminations on the then-current debate regarding psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud's work was widely discussed in Germany at the time. The focus in these films on the characters' inner torment, on the symbolism of their dreams, on the power of hypnosis, and the psychology of evil all seem grounded in that nation's intellectual engagement with Freud's new ideas.

10000 Mk.
Belohnung!
Wer ist der Mörder?
Seit Montag, dem 11. Juni ds. Js., werden vermißt:
Der Schüler Kurt Klawitzky und dessen Schwester Klara, wohnhaft gewesen Müllerstr. 470.
Aus verschiedenen Anzeichen ist zu schließen, daß die Kinder einem ähnlichen Verbrechen zum Opfer gefallen sind, wie im Herbst vorigen Jahres die Geschwister Doering.

9.33 The introduction of the child molester/murderer in Fritz Lang's *M* (1931). The film dared to ask viewers to understand the killer. Note the expressionist visual style as the ominous shadow reveals the character's dark side.

Hitler liked but seems to have misread many of the expressionist films discussed here. Legend has it that he greatly admired the filmmaker Fritz Lang's work and endeavored to appoint him to head the new Nazi film industry. When Lang, a progressive with Jewish ancestry, discovered Hitler's plans for him, he got on a train to Paris. Lang's exit signified and explained the end of expressionism.

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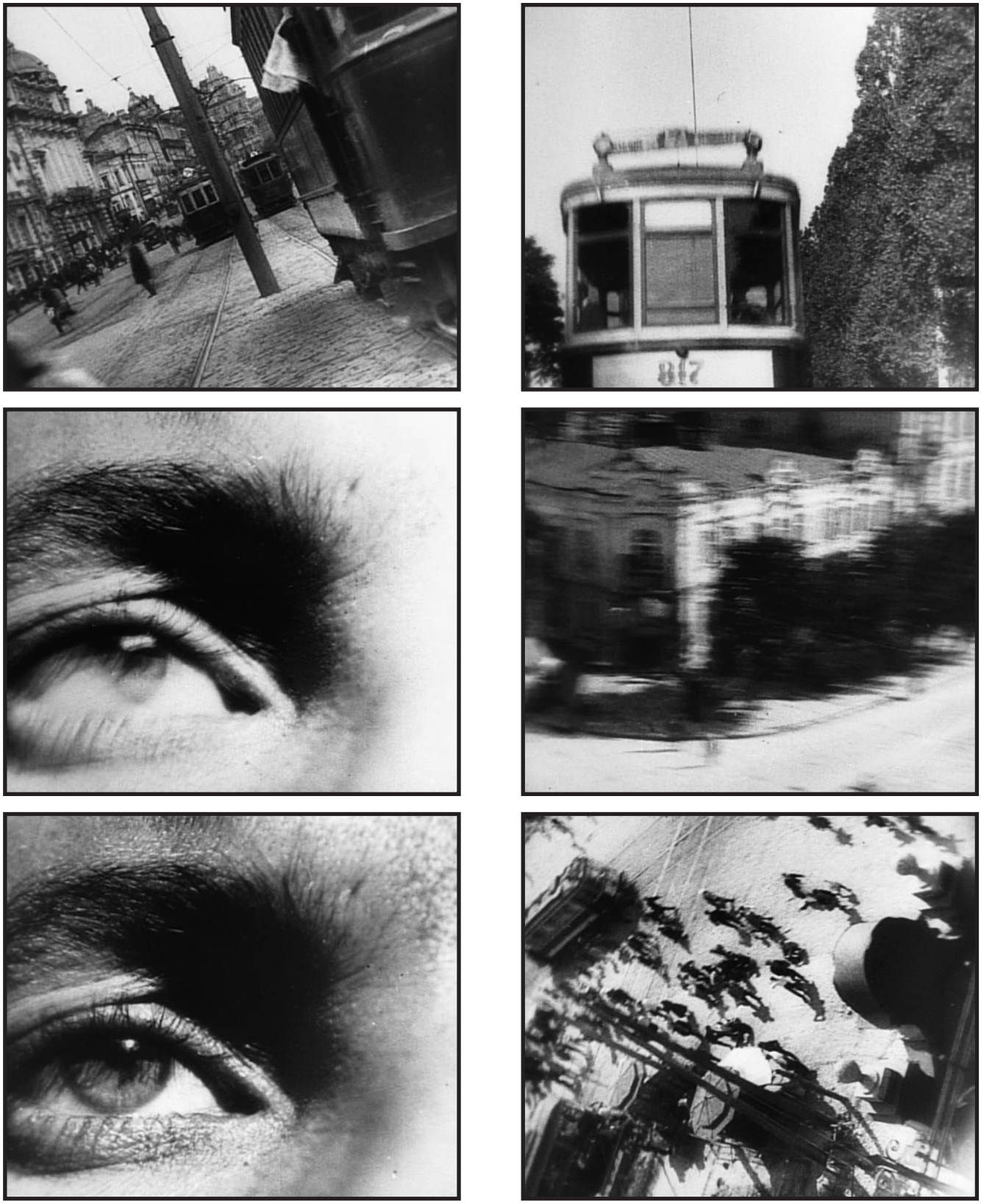

9.34–9.39 To simulate the hustle and bustle of the modern Soviet city in his film *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), Dziga Vertov intercut quickly between static images (the eye) and off-angle shots of things moving in the frame (the trolley, the pedestrians). The effect is kaleidoscopic, but the meaning was nonetheless apparent to the early Soviet filmgoer; it was an exciting time to be a Soviet citizen, to be on the bustling streets, to be a witness (an *eye*witness) to history in the making.

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9-3b Soviet Formalism

The Russian revolution of 1917, in which the tsar was ousted and the Bolsheviks established a communist government, ushered in a new era that encompassed politics, society, and art. Vladimir Lenin, who headed the new Soviet government, considered cinema the most influential of the arts and a valuable tool of propaganda for the vast new nation.

Postrevolution Soviet filmmakers believed in the primacy of the cut (as opposed to the shot). Following the editing experiments performed by the film school teacher Lev Kuleshov (see chapter 5), filmmakers like Dziga Vertov (*Man with a Movie Camera*, 1929), Sergei Eisenstein (*Potemkin*, 1925), V. I. Pudovkin (*Mother*, 1926), and Alexander Dovzhenko (*Earth*, 1930)—the directors who epitomized the **Soviet formalist** movement—all believed that the key to a revolutionary film language was editing. Indeed, the two principal Soviet theories of editing—Pudovkin's idea that editing was a matter of "linkage," that shots interconnected like links on a chain, and Eisenstein's theory of montage that theorized the "collision" between shots—were at bottom dialectic formulas. This is relevant here because dialectic reasoning lay at the heart of Marxist thought: thesis / antithesis = synthesis.

Dziga Vertov's newsreels and his experimental "day in the life of a new nation" feature *Man with a Movie Camera* used editing to create an energetic celebration of the emerging, modernizing Soviet state (figs. **9.34–9.39**). Alternating shots from different camera distances and angles with reminders that what we are watching has been photographed by a camera (we see Vertov himself behind the camera in the film) and that these images are meant to be witnessed in wide-eyed awe (the many images of spectating; the close-ups on eyes), Vertov ably showcased the Soviet formalist film style.

Vertov may well have been the most significant filmmaker for the fledgling nation—he headed the newsreel division of the new national Soviet cinema called Kino-Pravda ("a cinema of truth"). But Eisenstein acquired the biggest international reputation. Indeed, his 1925 film *Potemkin* about a failed mutiny aboard a Russian battleship in 1905 simultaneously celebrated the inevitable revolution of the working class and elaborated a new style of filmmaking that influenced filmmakers across the globe. The notion that meaning in cinema hinged upon the collision of shots, the critical juxtaposition of each shot to the shots that preceded and followed it, was ably demonstrated throughout the film. The legendary Odessa Steps sequence, for example, chronicles (actually it stages a fictionalized account of) a massacre of civilians by Cossacks (armed police) through shots of alternating distance and angle (see figs. **5.80–5.83**). The effect is at once frenetic, as such an event would be, and disorienting; in other words, the editing simulates the real experience of what is depicted on-screen. The mutiny itself (figs. **9.40–9.43**) is staged through a sequence of shots of Vakulinchuk, who leads the rebellion, and the sailors who follow him. Again Eisenstein alternates camera distance and angle, at once creating interest in the jubilation felt at unseating authority and the anxiety inherent in the risky task ahead.

The end point of the formalist movement came gradually with the advent of sound and Joseph Stalin's consolidation of power after 1927. Stalin was suspicious of artists in general and of the formalist filmmakers in particular because their free thinking ran counter to a blind faith in the government. Stalin presided over a systematic dismantling of the formalist movement and then carefully restricted filmmaking in the Soviet Union to work that blandly supported state programs and objectives.

In 1929 Eisenstein immigrated to the United States to make movies in Hollywood. It marked a final real and symbolic end to the movement but alas did not mark the beginning of something new for the director. Eisenstein's stay in Hollywood was disappointing; studio executives were at the time used to having their say in the editing of "their" movies. Eisenstein believed that editing was the key to creating meaning in cinema. The notion that a studio executive might alter his editing scheme or choice and sequence of shots was fundamentally unacceptable. Following his disappointing and brief Hollywood stint, Eisenstein returned to the Soviet Union in 1938 but found a movie industry stripped of its vitality, stripped of its centrality to the political and intellectual mission of the Bolshevik revolutionaries who introduced formalism in the 1910s.

Soviet formalism A film movement in the Soviet Union that took shape during the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) and unraveled in the early years of Joseph Stalin's repressive regime (1929). Soviet formalist filmmakers—including Sergei Eisenstein, V. I. Pudovkin, and Dziga Vertov—believed that the essential unit of meaning in cinema is the cut.

Italian neorealism A post–World War II film movement in Italy in which directors adapted the conventions of documentary realism in their fiction films. The best-known neorealist filmmakers are Roberto Rossellini, Luchino Visconti, and Vittorio De Sica.

9-3c Italian Neorealism

Neorealism took shape in post–World War II Italy and focused on the daunting task of rebuilding a nation in ruin. Adhering around a manifesto of sorts—expressed most eloquently in screenwriter Cesare Zavattini's 1953

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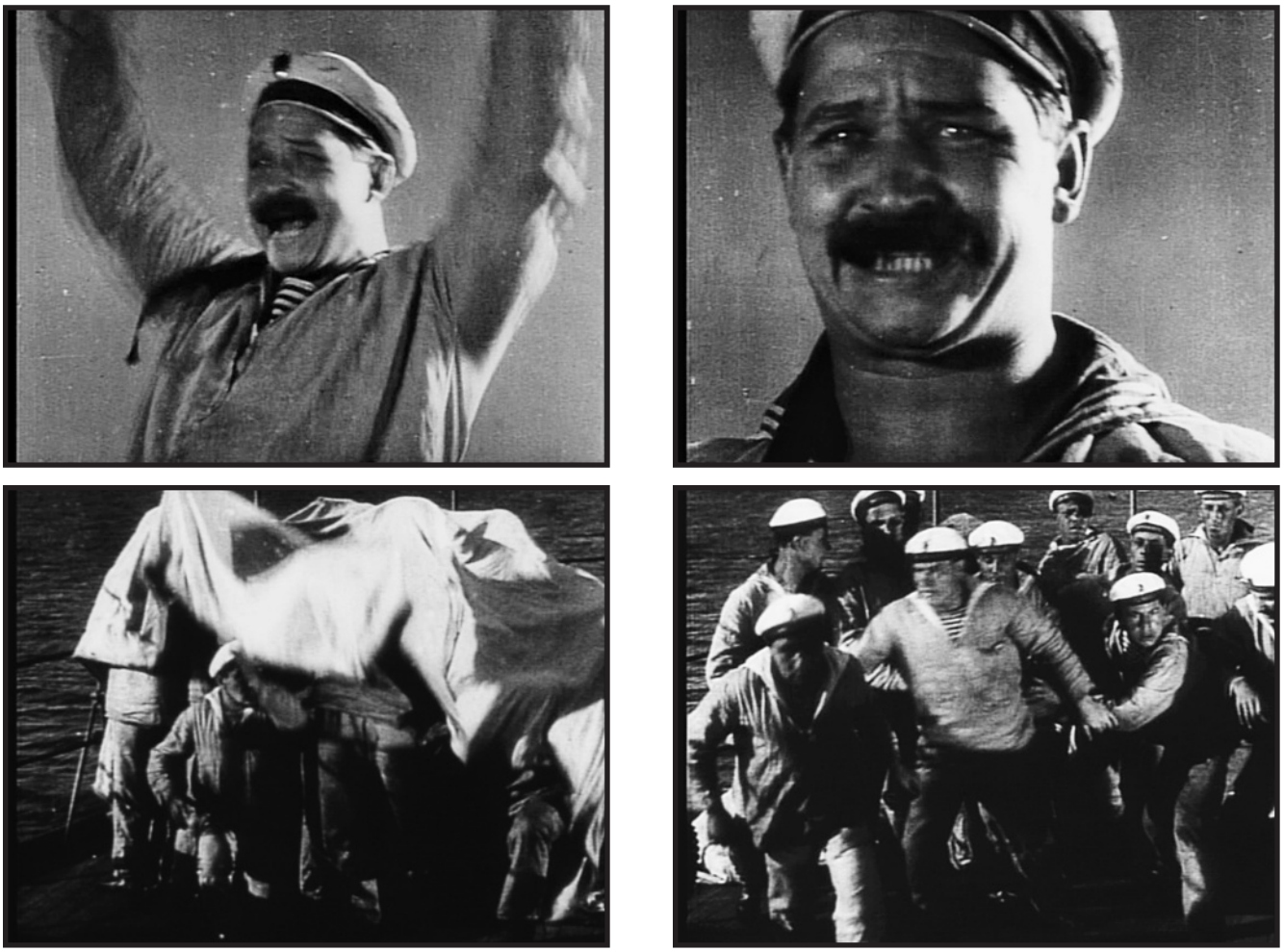

9.40–9.43 Vakulinchuk calls for action and the sailors put their lives on the line for the cause of social justice in Sergei Eisenstein *Potemkin* (1925).

essay "Some Ideas on the Cinema"—the neorealist filmmakers adopted the aesthetic conventions of documentary in the production of their fiction films. They used real locations, cast real people (unprofessional actors) even in leading roles, and shot in natural light. Their goal was to produce a seemingly unmediated reality that, as Zavattini proposed, gave individuals a sense of their historical importance as citizens of a formerly imperialist and intolerant fascist regime and as the hope of a new nation finally free of such tyranny.

The first important neorealist film was Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* (1945), shot and set in the tumultuous time between the German occupation of Italy and the Allied liberation that followed. The film celebrates the courage of the Italian partisans and their clandestine fight against the Nazis. It depicts the German occupiers as debauched villains who resort to torture and murder because their cause is corrupt and because the war has by then turned against them. In the film's disturbing climax, one of the heroes, Don Pietro (a soccer-playing priest who helps the Partisan underground) is executed in a schoolyard in full view of the children in his parish (figs. **9.44** and **9.45**). In a Catholic country like Italy, Don Pietro's martyrdom served as a frank reminder to filmgoers of the nation's brief surrender to the temptations of imperialism and fascism and their obligation to build a better future for Italy's next generation.

Neorealist films often focused on poverty, unemployment, and life amidst the ruins of what were once great cities. In *Bicycle Thieves* (released in the United States in 1948 as *The Bicycle Thief*), for example, a family's welfare hinges tenuously on the possession of a bicycle (fig. **9.46**). The bicycle is stolen by a street kid with epilepsy who lives in a whorehouse and is protected by the local Mafia. When the father fails to recover the bicycle, he is forlorn; he knows that without it he will lose his job crisscrossing the city putting up posters for Hollywood movies. So, in desperation, on the streets outside

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9.44 and 9.45 The partisan priest Don Pietro is executed in a schoolyard as the neighborhood children look on in Roberto Rossellini's neorealist film *Rome, Open City* (*Roma, città aperta*, 1945).

a soccer stadium, he decides to steal a bicycle. He gets caught and is humiliated in front of his son. In the film's final moments, the owner of the bicycle decides against turning the father over to police, and as father and son exit into the dusk, the boy takes his father's hand, granting forgiveness. The tears on the father's face tell us how important this gesture is to him, but true to the neorealist commitment to a cinematic truth, the father still does not have a bicycle and still does not have a job. Such are the bitter facts of life in postwar Italy.

French New Wave A group of post–World War II French directors including François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette, Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer, Alain Resnais, and Agnes Varda, all of whom strove to create a more spontaneous and personal style of filmmaking. Many of these directors began as film critics for the magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*.

9.46 The father (whom we see here cut off at the chest) in Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (*Ladri di biciclette,* 1948) finds a sort of grace at the end of the film (thanks to the love of his son), but like many Italians after the war, he will soon be out of work.

Other significant neorealist filmmakers include Luchino Visconti (*La Terra Trema*, 1947) and Giuseppe De Santis (*Bitter Rice* [*Riso amaro*], 1949), who, like Rossellini and De Sica, focused on the real conditions of life in Italy after the war. The movement eventually lost steam at the end of the 1950s, and most historians mark the beginning of a new, postneorealist Italian cinema with two films released in 1960: Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* and Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Avventura*, both of which chronicled a postwar generation lost amidst conspicuous consumption. These films reveal rather cynically that the political commitment at the heart of the neorealist project gave way to a pervasive sense of disengagement.

9-3d New Waves in France, Britain, and Eastern Europe

La nouvelle vague (the **French New Wave**), like the Italian neorealist movement, marked a seeming rebirth of a national cinema unsettled by the war and an embarrassing complicity with the Nazis. Neorealism commenced as the war was winding down. The seeming rebirth of the French film industry took more time—nearly fifteen years after the war's end—in large part because of the sins of collaboration under Vichy (the French collaborationist government under Nazi occupation) and the bloody aftermath of France's liberation. In France the industry had to wait for a new generation of filmmakers untainted by the war to come of age.

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9.47 Alain Resnais's 1955 documentary *Night and Fog* affirmed the horrors of the Holocaust using footage shot by the Nazis themselves. Many historians view this film as the necessary first step towards a new, postwar French cinema.

9.48 Francois Truffaut's New Wave film *The 400 Blows* (1959) told the story of a boy, Antoine, who, much like the director when he was that age, found joy in just one place: the movie theater. Here we see Antoine and a friend exiting a movie theater while playing hooky from school.

9.49 Truffaut's stand-in Antoine is frozen in the film's last image. His future, for the moment, is uncertain. Truffaut would return to Antoine (played throughout the series by the same actor, Jean-Pierre Léaud) in five more films culminating with the 1979 feature *Love on the Run*.

Alain Resnais's 1955 documentary *Night and Fog* is often cited by historians as the film that made the New Wave possible. The film focused unflinchingly on the horrors of the Holocaust and inferred French culpability in the deportation and extermination of its own citizens (fig. **9.47**). Historians contend that this was a necessary step for French cineastes to "move on"—that some very public "mea culpa," some very dramatic display of collective responsibility for collaborating with the Nazis was necessary before a new generation of filmmakers might introduce a new French national cinema.

Many of the filmmakers who participated in the New Wave had at one time worked for the French film magazine the *Cahiers du Cinéma* and were devoted attendees of screenings at the Cinémathèque Française, the French film archive. The *Cahiers* was edited at the time by André Bazin, a groundbreaking film critic who introduced the auteur theory: the notion that like other visual and narrative arts, films have an author or auteur (the director). The young writers working for him included François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette, Claude Chabrol, and Eric Rohmer. Legend has it that the neorealist filmmaker Roberto Rossellini dared these young men to stop writing about movies and start making them. They took him up on the challenge and set in motion the French New Wave.

The film that introduced this new wave of French filmmakers to the global audience was the 1959 film *The 400 Blows,* a semi-autobiographical film by Truffaut that chronicled a child's unhappy youth (fractured family, abusive teachers, reform school). The boy's only escape was to go to the cinema (fig. **9.48**). *The 400 Blows*, which won the Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, used a documentary style to further the impression of autobiography. In keeping with its astonishing realism, the film resists any neat narrative closure, ending with a freeze frame on Truffaut's stand-in, Antoine (fig. **9.49**). His future is, at film's end, anything but certain.

Truffaut's fellow *Cahiers* staffer and later auteur-rival Jean-Luc Godard hit the scene the following year with

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9.50 An absurdist image that offers a clever commentary on capitalist escape: Juliette dons a Pan Am bag to please a customer in *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967).

9.51 and 9.52 In *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her* (1967) Godard toys with the verisimilitude of film space with pictorial graphics and intertitles. The intertitle (**9.52**) translates to "the psychology of form."

Breathless, which introduced a radical new film style built upon documentary-style camera work and the attention-grabbing jump cut (see chapter 5). Many of Godard's early films are genre pastiches, reconsiderations of popular American film types like the crime picture (*Breathless*) and futurist science fiction (*Alphaville*, 1965). Godard's films grew increasingly "political" in the 1960s, culminating in two features released in 1967: *2 or 3 Things I Know about Her* and *Week End*, both ruminations on the banality of bourgeois existence.

The heroine of *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her* is a bored suburban housewife who moonlights as a prostitute. The escape proves unsatisfying; she discovers that every encounter is based on an exchange of cash (fig. **9.50**). Throughout *2 or 3 Things I Know about Her* Godard interrupts the narrative with expressive pictorial graphics that suggest American comic book or magazine advertisements (fig. **9.51**) and intertitles that tell us how to read the film (fig. **9.52**). In *Week End* Godard lampoons the family melodrama in order to critique bourgeois social institutions, especially marriage. As in *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her*, sex in *Week End* is subsumed by commerce, in this case a crazy plan to acquire an inheritance.

An end date for the movement is difficult to pin down. Some historians argue that the cinematic new wave ceased to be after May 1968, when a student protest and nationwide strike brought France to the verge of some very significant changes. Godard, for one, had invested a lot in the politics underpinning the strike, and when it failed—when the De Gaulle regime reasserted its control by declaring a state of emergency—he seemed to lose hope. He gave up on feature filmmaking and turned to documentary and TV production—a career shift that lasted for more than a decade.

As other European national cinemas were (re)born after the war, the term *new wave* became an appropriate descriptor for simultaneous or subsequent challenges to moribund or formerly censored and/or corrupt filmmaking traditions elsewhere in Europe. For example, a British new wave emerged in the late 1950s and 1960s in concert with new literary works of social realism. John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger*, for example, was adapted for the screen by Tony Richardson in 1959, and Allan Sillitoe's novel

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9.53 Youth in (violent) revolt in Lindsay Anderson's British New Wave feature *If* (1969).

9.54 Dusan Makavejev's wildly original *W. R. Mysteries of the Organism* (1971). The magazine she is reading is "The Communist" and the headline at the bottom of the tabloid reads: "How Karl Marx Fell in Love." With a single image, Makavejev's pokes fun at Communist propaganda and Western tabloid journalism.

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning was adapted by Karel Reisz in 1960.

Historians have since labeled the social-realist films in Great Britain after the war "kitchen sink cinema" because the design in these films was dressed down to match the reality of the working-class characters. These films were shot in a realist style quite like the neorealist films in Italy a decade earlier and Truffaut's films in France; indeed, many of the filmmakers began in the Free Cinema Group that specialized in personal documentaries. But much as these films came to characterize one aspect of postwar adjustment for the disillusioned working class, a far more buoyant, anarchic alternative emerged in the youth-oriented films celebrating the burgeoning pop culture in swinging London in the early 1960s. The youth-oriented films—*If* (fig. **9.53)** and *Hard Day's Night* (see figs. **5.94–5.98**)—deftly adapted TV techniques of three-camera, live coverage and commercial-style, fast-paced editing to capture the fleeting and unpredictable lives of postwar teenagers. Here as in the other new wave movements, the focus was on the transition from past to future, a transition made difficult for those depicted in the kitchen sink films and made easy for the rollicking youth living in the moment of pop culture bliss.

Several of the former Soviet bloc countries also enjoyed brief cinematic new waves after the war. Less directly focused on the war and its aftermath, these films examined life under Soviet influence. In Poland, for example, a new wave emerged featuring directors like Andrzej Wajda (*Ashes and Diamonds*, 1958) and Roman Polanski (*Knife in the Water*, 1962). Many historians argue that the cinematic new wave in Poland offered a prologue to the Solidarity movement in the 1980s. Similarly, the so-called Prague spring of Czech cultural "liberation" from the Soviet Union in 1968 was foreshadowed on-screen in the work of Czech new wave directors like Milos Forman (*The Loves of a Blonde*, 1965) and Jiri Menzel (*Closely Watched Trains*, 1966). And in the former Yugoslavia, Dusan Makavejev made wildly original films that featured graphic sex scenes and sampled documentary images intercut to contrast the joys of the flesh with the less satisfying seductions of popular political and intellectual schools of thought (fig. **9.54**).

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9-4 NON-WESTERN FILM

Moreso even than European cinema, the vast body of so-called non-Western film—movies made in Asia and Africa—cannot be properly addressed in these brief pages, and a much narrower focus is needed. What follows is a selective look at three modern non-Western film traditions in Japan, Hong Kong, and India, three highly creative national cinemas that have proven popular and influential on the world stage. The few pages here are not intended to fully account for a century-long film history in these countries, but instead they are meant to introduce the important films and filmmakers of a specific place and time with an eye on the relationship between (film) form and culture.

9-4a Modern Japanese Cinema

Movies in Japan date to 1896 when the Edison Kinetograph was first introduced. The first Japanese-made films borrowed heavily from the tradition of Kabuki theater, which is to say that from the very start they looked little like the Hollywood films of the time. As we focus here on modern, post–World War II Japanese cinema—yet another postwar new wave (roughly, 1950–1980)—dramatic formal differences between non-Western and Western cinema can still be observed.

9.55 The sixteenth-century, honor-bound warrior, the samurai, became a symbol of Japan's lost history and culture in its head-long rush into postwar society. *Seven Samurai* (*Shichinin no samurai,* Akira Kurosawa, 1954).

Japanese films are even on first glance different from what most American filmgoers are used to. They tend to concentrate more on character than action and focus more microscopically on details within the mise-en-scène. We can see in this distinct formal system a fundamental cultural difference—a reflection of a society more attuned to detail and more comfortable in small spaces, a society that is, in a word, different from ours.

The director most responsible for establishing an international reputation for postwar Japanese film is Akira Kurosawa, whose 1950 study of a crime and its various retellings, *Rashomon*, won the Golden Lion (grand prize) at the Venice Film Festival, this after its distributor was reluctant to submit it, fearing that the Western judges would not understand the film. Four years later Kurosawa directed *Seven Samurai*, an action film patterned after the Hollywood western but with a distinct Japanese historical context: the cowboys from the American version are in Kurosawa's film sixteenth-century, honor-bound warriors, samurai. A historical figure from a glorious (and glorified) past, the honorable samurai stood in stark contrast to the average postwar Japanese citizen's routine humiliations under American occupation after the war and his or her concessions to a growing Westernization in modern Japanese culture (fig. **9.55**).

Kurosawa went on to shoot a number of samurai films, including *Yojimbo* (1961), *Kagemusha* (1980), and *Ran* (1990). Though the stark black-and-white mise-en-scène of *Seven Samurai* and *Yojimbo* gave way to glorious widescreen color in *Kagemusha* (figs. **9.56** and **9.57**) and *Ran*, a basic compositional scheme held sway in all the films: the juxtaposition of interior and exterior space (of closed to open space; of cramped to expansive space) and the formality of every image, from the bare and meticulously composed interiors to the outdoors where the director emphasizes the formal pageantry of warfare.

The struggle with modernity to which Kurosawa's samurai films allude was recast in a more contemporary context in Nagisa Oshima's *In the Realm of the Senses (Ai no korîda)*, an erotic melodrama produced in 1976. The annihilating love affair between a married man and a geisha pits tradition against an increasingly impersonal and Westernized modern Japan. The film's graphic

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9.56 The sparse and meticulously composed interiors in Akira Kurosawa's *Kagemusha* (1980).

9.57 The pageantry of warfare captured in an extreme long shot reminiscent of the American western.

9.58 The importance of composition in Nagisa Oshima's erotic melodrama *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976).

sexuality and its astounding climax, in which the geisha mutilates her lover, may well have overshadowed for many filmgoers the film's trenchant critique of an increasingly amoral modern society. The meticulous design of the film's interior set-pieces (fig. **9.58**), including the graphic sex scenes, were shot, like a lot of Japanese films, with a camera placed as if seated on the floor, level to the action.

For American audiences the best-known Japanese film of this era is the post-nuclear horror picture *Godzilla* (*Gojira*, Inoshiro Honda, 1954). It too focused on the challenges of postwar Japanese society. The monster who lays waste to Tokyo has been awakened and rendered radioactive by bomb tests in the Pacific—a scenario all too close to reality given the events in Hiroshima and Nagasaki less than a decade earlier. The military is powerless to stop the monster (again, a World War II context is apparent), and it is the clever new generation of Japanese scholars and scientists who seize the day. In *Godzilla*, as in so many postwar Japanese films, we see writ large the political, social, and historical anxieties of a nation in transition.

Other important modern Japanese filmmakers include Kenji Mizoguchi (*Ugestu*, 1953), Yasujiro Ozu (*Tokyo Story [Tôkyô monogatari]*, 1953), Hiroshi Teshigahara (*Woman in the Dunes [Suna no onna]*, 1964), Kon Ichikawa (*The Makioka Sisters [Sasame-yuki]*, 1983), and Shohei Imamura (whose film *Vengeance Is Mine [Fukushû suru wa ware ni ari]* is discussed in chapter 1). Absent time or space here to do justice to their considerable contributions to global cinema, it is important to assert here, by way of conclusion, that the process of close reading for these films is no different from the methods we bring to bear on more familiar and accessible American films. We are able to focus on narrative, mise-en-scène, camera work, editing, and sound, and how they shape our understanding of a film's meaning.

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THE KOBAL COLLECTION

9.59 The American poster for the Bruce Lee martial-arts feature *Fists of Fury*, directed by Lo Wei for the Hong Kong action studio Golden Harvest in 1971. Lee was born in San Francisco, became an action film star in Hong Kong, and seemed poised to become a global star before his "death by misadventure" in 1973.

9-4b Contemporary Hong Kong Action Films

Modern Hong Kong cinema begins with the Shaw Brothers Studio, a vertically integrated conglomerate that in the 1960s specialized in ***wuxia pan***, Mandarin-dialect swordplay action films, as celebrated in Ang Lee's later international hit *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000). The Shaw brothers' films enjoyed box-office success in the burgeoning film markets of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand.

In 1970 Raymond Chow, an advertising executive with the Shaw Brothers Studio, left the company to form (with Leonard Ho) Golden Harvest. The new studio attained even wider international success than the Shaw Brothers with a series of kung-fu films starring the American-born martial arts expert Bruce Lee, including *Fists of Fury* (fig. **9.59**). Lee's popularity in Asia prompted a coproduction deal with Chow and Warner Bros., which had hoped to establish Lee as a fully international action star. The film the two studios made together, *Enter the Dragon* (Raymond Clouse, 1973), was as hoped an international sensation—the highest-grossing film in Asia to that date.

Lee's successor at Golden Harvest was Jackie Chan, a graduate of the Peking Opera School (a martial arts and acrobatics academy), who in stunt-based action-comedies gained the sort of international popularity Lee had seemed destined to achieve before his untimely death in 1973. Chan is equal parts Bruce Lee and Buster Keaton, an adept fighter but otherwise bumbling everyman astonished at his own ability to escape danger and subdue his adversaries. Like Keaton (and unlike Lee), Chan is an affable presence, but he makes sure (often in bloopers intercut into the closing credits) that there is no mistaking his martial arts and acrobatic talent or the risks he takes in such a stunt-based genre (figs. **9.60** and **9.61**). His early films for Golden Harvest include *Drunken Master* (*Jui kuen*, Yuen Woo-Ping, 1978), *The Young Master* (*Shi di chu ma*, Chan, 1980), and *Armour of God* (*Long xiong hu di*, Chan, 1986).

Chan is a natural "ham," and his goofy, sweet, and amazingly athletic screen persona made for an easy transition to American action comedies. Here we can see the global cinema at work; the accommodation of action stars from non-Western films in mainstream Hollywood blockbusters. He is best known to American audiences for his roles in two popular franchises, *Rush Hour 1, 2,* and *3* (Brett Ratner, 1998, 2001, and 2007) and *Shanghai Noon* (Tom Dey, 2000) and *Shanghai Nights* (aka *Shanghai Noon 2*, David Dobkin, 2003), action-buddy-comedies for which Chan's funny mangling of English and acrobatic, choreographed fight sequences seemed a perfect fit.

The next big star at Golden Harvest was the mainland-China–born martial arts champion Jet Li, whose stoic demeanor seems almost a cliché version of Western stereotypes regarding the inscrutable Asian hero. Li's career took off when he appeared in the producer-director Tsui Hark's epic *Once Upon a Time in China* (*Wong Fei Hung*), released in three parts: 1991 (fig. **9.62**), 1992, and 1993. The Vietnam-born Hark was educated in the United States before establishing himself at Golden Harvest, first making action films and then the popular comedy *Peking Opera Blues* (*Do ma daan*, 1986), which was a surprise hit on the U.S.

wuxia pan Mandarin-dialect swordplay action films.

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9.60 Part Bruce Lee, part Buster Keaton: Jackie Chan, the star of the Golden Harvest kung-fu film *The Young Master* (Chan, 1980). Note how the stunt is shot in full figure, much as a choreographed dance move might be photographed in a musical comedy.

9.61 Chan routinely includes bloopers in the closing credit sequence to show just how dangerous his brand of comedy really is. Here he is holding his back after landing badly from an aerial stunt in *Rush Hour* (Brett Ratner, 1998).

9.62 Jet Li in the first installment of Tsui Hark's action trilogy for Golden Harvest, *Once Upon a Time in China* (1991). Hark's expert use of widescreen gives a panoramic view of the full-figure, martial-arts action.

art house circuit. His teaming up with Li made for an action trilogy that could be taken seriously internationally just as many of Chan's early, cheaply, and poorly produced and dubbed features made at the same studio could not.

Like Chan, Li made an easy transition to American features, including the popular *Romeo Must Die* (fig. **9.63**) and its sequel *Cradle 2 the Grave* (Andrzej Bartkowiak, 2002). These films mark the extent to which action cinema has become globalized. *Romeo Must Die* stars a Chinese-born, martial-arts national champion (Li) and a Bahamian-born pop singer (Aaliyah); it is directed by a Polish-born former cinematographer (Bartkowiak) for an American studio (Warner Bros.) and is loosely based on *Romeo and Juliet*, written in the sixteenth century by the British playwright William Shakespeare.

There is a significant difference between the way American and Hong Kong action sequences are shot. American action sequences are assembled from combining master shots of continuous action with separately shot close-ups. Hong Kong action sequences are usually shot in short bursts with each move choreographed not only between the actors but between the actors and the camera. Editing in the Hong Kong action films is fairly linear, a matter of linking the consecutive sequences that compose the entire set-piece. American action in contrast is more fragmentary, the product of alternating full-figure shots and close-ups.

The contemporary Hong Kong action film is a fascinating mix of stylistic elements from the *wuxia pan* and martial-arts films popular in the 1960s and 1970s, both of which featured elaborate, often aerial, stunt work and the narrative formulas from the 1980s Hollywood action film, which had by that time gained worldwide popularity. Some contemporary Hong Kong films are composed almost entirely of acrobatic action set-pieces often highlighted by stop-motion and slow motion—a choreographed, stylized version of the Asian action set-piece and American gangster narrative that has proved to be popular with audiences worldwide.

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9.63 One of Jet Li's many martial-arts stunts in *Romeo Must Die* (Andrzej Bartkowiak, 2000).

9.64 Chow Yun-Fat in a familiar pose, gun drawn in John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow* (1986).

9.65 In *The Matrix* (1999) Andy and Larry (now Lana) Wachowski signal their indebtedness to Hong Kong action and *wuxia pan* films. Here Neo battles his adversaries with two guns blazing in an action sequence that alludes to the films of John Woo.

The best-known Hong Kong studio director of these more Westernized action features is the Chinese-born John Woo, who with the tough-guy, action star Chow Yun-Fat, made ultra-violent crime films that featured elaborate stop- and slow-motion action set-pieces. The films often focus on a character at a moral crossroads—an ex-gangster reconciling with his policeman brother in *A Better Tomorrow* (*Ying hung boon sik*) (fig. **9.64**), a hired gun who accepts one last job to pay for an operation that will restore the sight of an unintended victim in *The Killer* (*Dip huet seung hung*, 1989)—but the premise is inevitably overwhelmed by the choreographed action. Legend has it that when an American studio executive reluctantly affirmed, "I guess Woo *can* direct action scenes," the American film director Quentin Tarantino added, "Sure, and Michelangelo can paint ceilings."

Like Chan and Li, Woo eventually landed in Hollywood, where his distinctively Hong Kong action style has enlivened and emboldened otherwise formulaic Hollywood action films. Woo's American *oeuvre* includes *Face/Off* (1997) and *Mission Impossible 2* (2000). His success and the popularity of Hong Kong martial-arts films and film stars among younger moviegoers in the United States has fueled a new more global "American" action style. The *Matrix* films directed by Andy and Larry (now Lana) Wachowski, for example, combine fight scenes from kung-fu and *wuxia pan* films and action set-pieces from contemporary Hong Kong action-packed crime films with state-of-the-art American studio special-effects work (fig. **9.65**). It is interesting that the action film, as epitomized by the popular *Matrix* series, is the one genre that has become so fully globalized, seamlessly merging film traditions from the east and west.

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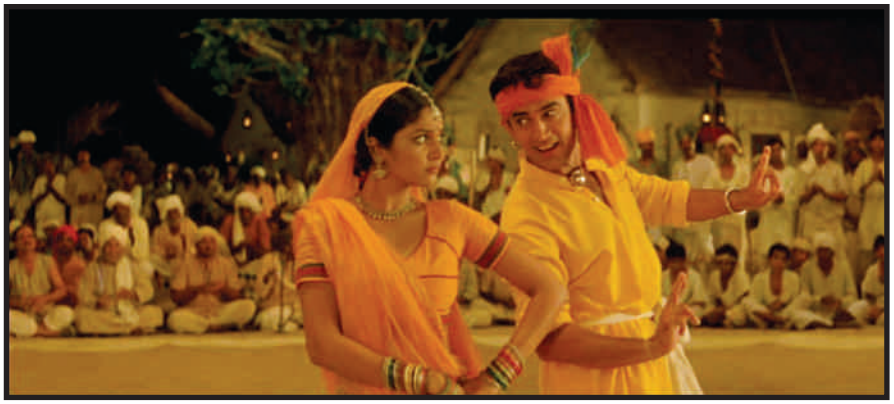

9.66 Bollywood movie star Aamir Khan in *Lagaan: Once upon a Time in India* (directed by Ashutosh Gowariker for Khan's production company in 2001). Here he sings his way into his co-star Gracie Singh's heart.

9.67 A rag-tag group of Indian villagers take on the nattily dressed cricketers from the colonial power Great Britain.

9.68 A reminder of just how out of place the British cricketers (and British colonialists in general) are in India; two British players chase a wayward ball to the feet of a colorfully decorated elephant . . . not exactly a scene you'd find back in England.

9-4c Bollywood

Moviemaking in India in the post-war period has featured a range of film styles and types, including the critically acclaimed art cinema of Satyajit Ray and Aparna Sen and the contemporary transnational filmmaking of Mira Nair and Shekar Kapur. Much like the American film industry, which produces a wide range of movies but is often characterized by its action blockbusters, Indian cinema is routinely associated with its most visible product line: **Bollywood**. Produced by the Hindi film industry at the extraordinary rate of 1,500 movies a year, Bollywood features are extremely popular in South Asia, Africa, and the United Kingdom (where in 2008 they out-grossed English-language films). They are known for their epic length and elaborate musical production numbers, which are worked into a wide variety of genres. They mix without apology (or for Western audiences what might pass for adequate narrative preparation or explanation) the present and past of Indian history and society, as well as the natural and supernatural (in the form of Hindu gods and goddesses). For Western audiences, the formal challenges posed by these films can be significant, but cultural and language differences are mollified if not transcended by the films' infectious spirit of fun.

Though often promoted as divertissements and escapist fun, some Bollywood films focus on

Bollywood Films produced by the Hindi film industry that feature elaborate production numbers that are worked into a wide variety of genres.

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9.69 *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) concludes in a manner consistent with the Bollywood formula: Jamal wins a million dollars, escapes poverty, and gets the girl. To mark the happy ending, the train station erupts into a musical-dance number.

serious and important social issues. For example, *Lagaan: Once upon a Time in India*, which received an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film in 2002, features the usual Bollywood musical production numbers but also presents a thoughtful postcolonial history lesson (figs. **9.66–9.68**). The film focuses on a game of cricket between Indian villagers and experienced British cricketers. The game is meant to resolve a local dispute over taxation (*lagaan* is Hindi for tax), but as the film makes clear, the contest comes to signify a growing resistance in the village (and by extension other Indian villages at the time) to British colonial rule. The match foreshadows the coming Indian struggle for independence and not incidentally the nation's future dominance in the sport. Though the film is almost entirely in Hindi, and with its freewheeling mix of historical drama and elaborate musical numbers it runs nearly 4 hours, Sony Pictures Classics picked up *Lagaan* for a U.S. release and platformed the film in a successful thirty-four-screen, art-house run.

Indian cinema in general and Bollywood in particular achieved worldwide notice thanks to *Slumdog Millionaire* (fig. **9.69**), which won the 2009 Best Picture Oscar and grossed nearly $150 million in the United States alone. The film is not really a Bollywood film, but it is a model twenty-first-century global product and as such introduced elements of Bollywood film into a more Western package. *Slumdog Millionaire* was produced by a British production company (Celador), which was purchased a few months before the film's release by a Japanese conglomerate (Sony, which also owns the American distributors Columbia Pictures, Tri-Star, and Sony Pictures Entertainment). Danny Boyle, the film's director, is British, as is the film's scriptwriter, Simon Beaufoy. The screenplay is based on a novel (*Q&A*) written by former Indian diplomat Vikas Swarup and stars a young man of Indian descent born and educated in England (Dev Patel), who appears with veteran Indian and Bollywood industry actors.

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

The history of film in the United States can be viewed as the evolution of Hollywood as a mode of production and distribution and of independents as a separate but parallel development. International cinemas have their own histories, which have influenced and been influenced by Hollywood.

9-1 HOLLYWOOD

Learning Outcome: ***Identify the eras in Hollywood filmmaking from 1896 to the present day, and recognize the major filmmakers of each era.***

- The history of Hollywood can be organized into stages or periods that reflect large-scale changes in the film business: early cinema (1895–1914), silent cinema (1914–1928), the classical era (1928–1947), Hollywood in transition (1948–1968), the auteur renaissance (1968–1980), and the new Hollywood (1980–present).
- The films in each era were shaped by such factors as the power of the studios, censorship of adult content, competition from other entertainment industries, the political and social climate, and the creativity and appeal of individual directors and performers.

9-2 AMERICAN INDEPENDENTS

Learning Outcome: ***Discuss key moments in indie film history.***

- "Race films" are an early example of independent cinema. These films focused on issues of interest to African Americans, whose lives were mostly ignored in mainstream films.
- B movies were created to offer a double-feature to filmgoers in the 1930s through the 1950s.
- Another early type of fast and cheap independent filmmaking was the exploitation film, which appealed to filmgoers' fascination with sinful behavior or interest in pop culture fads.
- While the independent film market offers a showcase for women and people of color, the tight production budgets and limited playoff in theaters restricts their access to a small audience.
- In contemporary Hollywood, *independence* is a term often used more casually to refer to films directed by independent-minded auteurs.

9-3 EUROPEAN FILM

Learning Outcome: ***Analyze the relationships among history, culture, and film form in four key European film movements: German expressionism, Soviet formalism, Italian neorealism, and the French New Wave.***

- Expressionist films embodied a sense of foreboding in Germany between the wars, with ominous lighting and dramatic fields of darkness within the frame. Their characters and themes suggest a collective desire for someone to save the nation from peril both supernatural (monsters, killers, maniacs) and commonplace (poverty, inflation).
- Formalism emerged in the Soviet Union just after the Russian Revolution. Two Soviet theories of editing were introduced: Pudovkin's idea that editing was a matter of "linkage," that shots interconnected like links on a chain, and Eisenstein's theory of montage that theorized the "collision" between shots.
- Neorealism took shape in post–World War II Italy. Neorealist filmmakers made films about ordinary life during and after the war that used real locations, cast nonprofessional actors, and shot in natural light. Their goal was to give Italian audiences a sense that they were participating in an important historical moment.
- The French New Wave marked the rebirth of cinema in a nation haunted by its complicity with the Nazis. New waves emerged in other European countries as well and were also characterized by filmmakers' attempts to rework conventional formulas.

9-4 NON-WESTERN FILM

Learning Outcome: ***Appreciate the contributions of filmmakers working outside the Americas and Europe, and discuss the key aspects of postwar cinemas in Japan, Hong Kong, and India.***

- In many postwar Japanese films we see the anxieties of a nation in transition from war-era Japan, through the American Occupation, on to its emergence as a world commercial and industrial power.
- Contemporary Hong Kong cinema has attracted global audiences to its unique mix of stylized Asian action set-pieces and American gangster narrative.
- The enormous output of the Indian film industry known as Bollywood is characterized by epic-length, elaborate, musical production numbers and stories that bring in elements from Indian mythology and history, contemporary life, and Western influences.

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FOCUS on Analyzing Film History: *Bicycle Thieves*

Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) was a landmark film in the Italian neorealist movement. It refers to a specifically Italian predicament at a moment in history when that country was in physical ruin and spiritual crisis. We can see in the film's narrative content, mode of production, and visual style a commitment to the movement—a discernible difference from the American films from that era.

The film's main couple struggle with basic human comforts and as a result they argue a lot. But we know they love each other from this scene. It begins with Antonio talking about his new job as Maria carries both buckets. When she stumbles going downhill, he realizes he's been talking about his problems and not paying attention to her. He grabs one of the buckets, a sweet gesture that reveals in the midst of all the despair and chaos his love for her. Note how a single image from the film reveals many of the key aspects of this movement.

Two distinct generations literally cross paths: the older generation who lived through the Mussolini regime and World War II moving towards the camera and the new generation of children moving in the opposite direction. This was a key theme in many neorealist films: a cold, hard look at the present and a nervous look to the future.

The lead actor, Lamberto Maggiorani, had never been in a film before. The director wanted a real person to embody (and not impersonate) the Italian everyman in the film.

Consistent with neorealist tenets, the scene is sunlit (no artificial light) and is captured on the fly by a moving camera, like a documentary.

Antonio and Maria live in a major Italian city but they need to fetch water from a community well. In 1948 this image revealed to an international audience the astonishing fact that in a major city in a former European world power, many citizens do not have running water.

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ANALYZE THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Use the following questions to consider the significance of the historical and cultural context of the film you are analyzing. You will need to do additional research to answer many of these questions. For each of the films, answer these general questions as well:

- In what country and during which year was the film produced? What were the major historical events and social trends of that place and time? Which of these events and issues are addressed, either directly or indirectly, in the film?

9-1 HOLLYWOOD	• During which era of Hollywood filmmaking was the film made? • Does the treatment of sex, violence, and/or drugs reveal a censorship code? • Does the film reflect a particular studio's or director's style? • Who is the star in the movie? What was the star's image or public persona, and how does that image affect the part he or she plays?
9-2 AMERICAN INDEPENDENTS	• Who produced this film, and what makes this producer an "independent"? • Where was this film originally screened? What kinds of audiences did it attract? • How do the style and/or story differ from that of Hollywood films of the same period?
9-3 AND 9-4 EUROPEAN FILM AND NON-WESTERN FILM	• Is the film part of a larger film movement? How do its style and/or story reflect that movement? • What can you learn from this film about the culture that produced it—its values and stylistic preferences? • How do these films evince different styles and narrative strategies from American films of the same period?

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